

Washington, DC – Today, Congressman Harry Teague introduced The VetStar Veterans Friendly Business Act of 2010, a bill to promote employment opportunities for veterans. If passed, the bill would create an award program to honor and highlight businesses who hire and employ veterans. The program would be administered through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

“Many times, it’s not enough to voice our support and respect for service men and women returning home from war; we need to take action in our communities. This bill will recognize local businesses who go above and beyond by hiring the veterans who in today’s economic environment are finding it increasingly difficult to find stable employment,” said Harry Teague, a member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee. “The legislation I introduced today proposes a low cost award program for businesses that actively hire veterans. By recognizing deserving businesses in our communities, this bill aims to not only increase opportunities for veterans, but also have a positive impact on the companies recognized.”

Teague’s bill would create an incentive for businesses to hire more veterans by directing the Department of Veterans Affairs to develop an annual awards program to recognize businesses who hire veterans. The certificate of recognition, to be displayed by business owners, aims to help businesses build a strong reputation in the veteran community and increase business – if they make strong efforts to work with and employ members of the veterans community. The program requirements and selection process would be administered by the VA, with hopes of replicating it at the state level.

According to the Department of Labor, when the national unemployment rate hit 9.3% last year, veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars were unemployed at a rate of 10.2%. Unemployment for male Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans has tripled since the recession began, rising from 5

percent in March 2007 to 15 percent last month.

Congressman Teague has continually made veterans' issues a top priority. Most recently, his Energy Jobs for Veterans Act, which seeks to establish programs to provide on-the-job training, apprenticeship, real experience, and long-term employment in the energy field to veterans, was passed by the House of Representatives. He also helped to secure advanced appropriations for the VA and introducing legislation aimed at addressing and reducing the impact PTSD and mental health issues have on the lives of returning veterans. Recently, he lead a bi-partisan group in forming the Invisible Wounds Caucus, to promote awareness of and solutions for the mental health challenges facing our service members and veterans.

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